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ABSTRACT

The personal coat-of-arms speech provides students with specific directions in constructing a speech of introduction and has been used with success at Illinois State University, Daley College (Chicago), St. Xavier University (Chicago), and Ohio State University. The personal coat-of-arms speech gives students concrete experience on which to draw as they study aspects of speech, such as working with a visual aid, practicing delivery technique, brainstorming ideas, and learning about the relationship of language to values. The assignment requires students to prepare a visual aid with images representing 2 things they do well, something they fear, someone/something they love, how they would spend a $10 million lottery prize, and what they see themselves doing in the future. They must also invent or appropriate a motto which represents a value that guides the way they live. When students present their coat-of-arms, they are not allowed to speak from notes, instead they are encouraged to use their visual aid as a memory clue, elaborating on the images to explain what they represent to the individual. Adopted by a number of instructors who teach presentational speaking, this speech assignment has met with much positive response. (A two-page assignment criteria is appended.) (CR)

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The Personal Coat-of-Arms Speech: Application in the Basic Course

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The Personal Coat-of-Arms Speech: Application in the Basic Course

The personal coat-of-arms speech[1] is a favorite of my students because it provides them with specific directions in constructing a speech of introduction. In addition, this speech is useful as a concrete examplar of a number of concepts taught in most speech courses. It provides students with concrete experience on which to draw as they study aspects of speech, such as working with a visual aid, practicing delivery technique, brainstorming ideas, and learning about the relationship of language to values.

Description

The instructor should include the coat-of-arms assignment sheet (see attached) in the course syllabus or distribute it on the first or second day of class. This assignment requires students to prepare a visual aid with images representing two things they do well, something they fear, someone/something they love, how they would spend a $10 million lottery prize, and what they see themselves doing in the future. They also must invent or appropriate a motto which represents a value that guides the way they live. Students are encouraged to be creative with their visual aids, and many of them spend a good deal of time

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[1] Although I did not invent the personal coat-of-arms speech myself, I am responsible for the heavy revisions and instructional strategy described in this proposal.
I do not know where this assignment originates; the coat-of-arms was popular among graduate students in the Communication Department of Illinois State University and this is where I first came into contact with it.

making collages of magazine pictures, family photos, etc.

When students present their coat-of-arms they are not allowed to speak from notes; instead, they are encouraged to use their visual aid as a memory cue, elaborating on the images to explain what they represent to the individual. The instructor may need to remind the students that their purpose is to explain each image. In some cases, it's necessary to ask the student questions about the images should he/she not provide detailed elaboration. Each speech may range from two to five minutes although some go considerably longer. It may be necessary to impose a time constraint on the speech--two to three minutes, probably.

Instructional Strategy

The primary use of the coat-of-arms is as a speech of introduction. In this capacity, it is useful because it frames students' introductions of themselves in an organized manner. Compared to other speeches of introduction, the personal coat-of-arms provides students with many common frames of reference, allowing them quickly to get to know each other's interests. Perhaps most importantly, students have fun with this speech as they get to talk about themselves without the constraint of a manuscript or imposed theme. In addition, this speech gives students practice in a variety of speech activities of which they aren't aware at the time. Throughout the course, when introducing new concepts, instructors can draw on the coat-of-arms speech

as an example in which students have already had concrete experience. These concepts include:

1) Preparing and using a visual aid: creating a coat-of-arms gives students practice in developing effective visual support of their messages. The constraints of the visual portion of the assignment also leaves room for creative flair in developing methods of visual elaboration as well as providing practice speaking with the support of visual aids.

2) Practicing delivery technique: since they are not allowed to use any speaking notes other than their coat-of-arms, students get practice using an extemporaneous speaking style but in an environment of reduced stress as they are talking on a topic they know most intimately--themselves. Later in the course, the instructor can prompt students to draw on this experience as they learn how to prepare and use a cue-word outline as their speaking notes.

3) Generating ideas for presentations throughout the quarter: the coat-of-arms serves as a kind of mini-survey of students interests, backgrounds, and ideals, which supports attempts to generate ideas for speeches through various brainstorming exercises. The instructor can take advantage of this function by prompting students to recall and discuss values or interests that they hold in common (e.g. several of them fear "spiders" or get happiness from

their children), using these commonalities as a basis for brainstorming or finding topics.

4) Learning about language, values, and culture: basic communication courses often include units that tie the use of language to cultural and personal values. The motto statement used in the coat-of-arms allows students to see how value is incorporated in or constructed by language.

Evaluation

The personal coat-of-arms has been adopted by a number of my colleagues who teach presentational speaking at the Ohio State University's Department of Communication. I've used it in speech courses at four different schools--Illinois State University, Daley College (Chicago), St. Xavier University (Chicago), and Ohio State. In general, I've received positive response from instructors who have used it in their classrooms.

Personal Coat-of-Arms

In this assignment you are asked to draw, paste together, spray paint or in some other fashion create your own personal "coat-of-arms." Traditionally, a coat-of-arms is a crest worn to represent the family or clan from which a member of royalty derives. Your personal coat-of-arms, however, is a visual representation of YOU, of your hopes and fears and what you value, and you will be required to orally present and explain your coat-of-arms to the class.

Create your own personal coat-of-arms by following the instructions below. Remember, when you present it to the class, you will have to explain each section to us. And, although you are not being graded for your artistic abilities, keep in mind that an effective visual aid is one that is large enough and clear enough for the entire audience to see. The attached drawing is included only as a model for what the final product should look like. Please do not draw, paint or crayon your coat-of-arms on this page; I think it will be much too small for the audience to see well.

A final word. Your grade on this presentation is based solely on your willingness to get up and try. Be creative. Make a collage or use a separate page for each drawing if you wish.

Sections 1 & 2	Draw two things you do well. Playing baseball, making cookies, being a good parent, etc.
Section 3	Draw a picture of something you fear. Your boss? The dark? Barney the Dinosaur?
Section 4	This large section provides plenty of space to depict what you would do if you won $10 million in the lottery.
Section 5	Trace, sketch or mold anything you want to trace, sketch or mold.
Section 6	Draw something that makes you happy or something/someone you love.
Section 7	Draw what you would like to do in the future--career, graduate school, marriage, travel--anything. Try to be realistic.
Motto	Finally, create a motto for yourself. A motto is a short statement, 2-6 words long, that describes your philosophy of life (e.g. "Don't worry, be happy," "An unexamined life is not worth living.").

BE PREPARED TO EXPLAIN IT ALL TO THE CLASS